

## The REALL News

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The official newsletter of the Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land  
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Electronic Version

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Purpose:

The Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land (REALL) is a non-profit educational and scientific organization. It is dedicated to the development of rational thinking and the application of the scientific method toward claims of the paranormal and fringe- science phenomena.

REALL shall conduct research, convene meetings, publish a newsletter, and disseminate information to its members and the general public. Its primary geographic region of coverage is central Illinois.

REALL subscribes to the premise that the scientific method is the most reliable and self-correcting system for obtaining knowledge about the world and universe. REALL not not reject paranormal claims on a priori grounds, but rather is committed to objective, though critical, inquiry.

The REALL News is its official newsletter.

Membership information is provided elsewhere in this newsletter.

Board of Directors: Chairman, David Bloomberg; Assistant Chairman, Prof. Ron Larkin; Secretary-Treasurer, Wally Hartshorn; Newsletter Editor, Bob Ladendorf; At-Large Members, Prof. Steve Egger, Frank Mazo, and Kevin Brown.

Editorial Board: Bob Ladendorf (Newsletter Editor), David Bloomberg (electronic version editor), (one vacancy).

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From The Editor -- Bob Ladendorf

This issue of The REALL News makes a lot of sense -- or is that senses. We see light and dark, as well as not seeing the backs of aliens. We get involved in alien olfactory stuffing efforts. We can feel the purported, pseudoscientific cures for warts when reading letters to Ann Landers. We can almost hear the televised assertions of Noah's ark advocates and its refutations by scientists as described in REALLity Check. And we can almost taste the controversial "vitamin supplements."

That all may be a bit of a stretch, but we do have for you a variety of interesting--and offbeat--topics, including a "light" look at the "dark sucker" theory. Our lead article is from Central Illinois writer Martin Kottmeyer, who is no stranger to The REALL News. His article on "Pencil-Neck Aliens" was the feature in our first issue. In this issue, he tackles alien nasal implants in humans. I even left in his slang term for nose products. Even though readers may cringe at reading such an oddly titled article, there is a serious analysis of alleged implants of many kinds in human beings.

As always, Chairman Bloomberg's careful monitoring of print and visual media offers refreshing--and often sardonic--views of the failings, prejudices and sometimes balanced treatments by the media in covering paranormal and pseudoscientific matters.

As a reminder, there will be no REALL meeting in July. We expect to meet on August 16 at Sangamon State University in Room E of the Public Affairs Center. Hope to see you there.

/s/ Bob Ladendorf

From the Chairman -- David Bloomberg [Editor's Note: Chairman David Bloomberg, and his new 4th of July wife, Sharri, are taking their honeymoon in the Bermuda Triangle area. If he is "lost" there, he wishes all REALL members the best of luck in the future! Maybe he can at least see Elvis!?!]

Here is his short column: FAMILY MEMBERSHIP -- We have added a new type of membership. Now, all the members of your family can enjoy the benefits of REALL membership. The family membership will be \$30 annually, and one newsletter will be sent to the whole family. DISCOUNTED BOOK SALES -- REALL members can buy any book from the Prometheus Books catalog for 20 percent off the list price, plus \$1 per book for shipping (if you can book up the book from us at a monthly meeting). If you want a catalog, you can pick one up at the next meeting or contact Prometheus at the Warehouse and Fulfillment Center, 59 John Glenn Drive, Buffalo, NY 14228-2197. Phone: (716) 691-0133. REALL will also benefit from these sales.

{EXCLUSIVE} The Alien "Booger" Menace by Martin Kottmeyer

As if life wasn't silly enough already, UFOlogists are warning us that aliens are flying around and sticking things up people's noses. We all knew aliens are supposed to be different, but who would have expected them to be as "geeky" as that. On the matter of believing this claim, we'd suspect even ole Ripley might pause and say, "NOT!"

Such claims do exist, however, and have become more numerous in recent years. Stark incredulity may be the proper response, but my doubt took the form of wondering how such a notion came into being.

It seemed likely that UFOlogists didn't plant the idea into their claimants' minds. Their comments exude puzzlement. Mind control was the first guess, but David Jacobs now includes at least four more possibilities in his discussion in Secret Life. They might be tracking devices. They might telemeter hormone levels in the body. They might be transceivers to facilitate alien-human communications. They might generate molecular changes necessary to transport humans through walls.

Doubtless, there are future avenues yet to be explored. Some that occur to me: they are industrial "boogers" designed to harvest biochemical elixirs unique to human nasal secretions; they are "booger" exchanges meant as an olfactory sign of cosmic brotherhood (not blood-brothers but "booger"-brothers); or they might be a ritual transcultural initiation necessary as a legal formality before anyone from their society converses with outsiders.

The problems common to all such guesses is that nasal implants would be potentially fatal to their hosts. The sinus

passages are notoriously septic environments. No surgeon would countenance such procedures. They are impossibilities demanding to be treated as fantasy.

A difficulty specific to the idea that implants are mind control devices is that implants have been tried and largely abandoned by neurologists. Early experiments with electrical probes in the brain elicited certain thoughts and sensations which seemed to open the possibility that implanted electrodes might one day be used to control behavior, hopefully to curb violent impulses.

Wilder Penfield, the leading pioneer in these studies, came away with a different conclusion based on what he was seeing. Compelled behavior was never present and the brain had the ability to reroute impulses and relearn behaviors when brain tissue was removed. He declared mind control an impossibility.

Other workers, inspired by the animal implant study, dramatically displayed by Delgado in a bullring, continued to try to develop the technology for human mind implants. Elliot Valenstein, critically reviewing the previous work in his 1975 *Brain Control*, suggested Delgado's work involved animal confusion rather than control and declared the obstacles to further advancement or refinement were of a fundamental sort implicit in the neurological flexibility of brain function. Penfield was right. Implants had little or no practical value.

Brain implants were too deliciously insidious an idea to ignore, and Hollywood used it more than once in their products. The highpoint of the exploitation of the idea was *The Terminal Man* (1973). A man is implanted with a series of electrodes to help curb his psychopathic tendencies. Unfortunately, the pleasure centers are activated in a manner which sends him on a killing spree. Long before this, aliens were forcing humans into sabotage as early as *Invaders from Mars* (1953) and *Battle in Outer Space* (1960). In the former, the victims were placed unconscious on an operating table while a needle-like device forced an explodable implant into the back of the neck. In the latter, a man is driving along in his car when a strobing beam of light surrounds him while aliens implant a radio control device telling him he has become a new slave of their glorious planet. He then experiences missing time and finds himself blocking city traffic with a copy telling him his forehead is bleeding.

I wondered for a time if an episode of *The Outer Space* titled "The Man with the Power" might have been an influence in originating the implant fad. A mousy fellow played by Donald Pleasance volunteers to have a small device called a "link-gate" implanted in his brain. It is implanted above the nose with the intention of funnelling cosmic energy into a form of super-psychokinesis. Raymond Fowler pointed out that an anonymous UFO witness known to him was told by an alien that an implant placed in the side of her body would hopefully result in better communication and power. I know of no other instances of implants being associated with power. None of these implant dramas, however, involved devices being stuck up someone's nose. (Well, yes, there is *Total Recall* and that hilariously large implant being pulled out of the nose, but that came too recently to be an influence.)

Why was such a bizarre path of insertion being reported by the abductees? A Freudian might suggest it was a form of "displacement." Dreams often transform events in surreal ways. Perhaps it was some sort of transmutation of sexual intercourse. Ernest Taves suggested such a possibility in the Winter 1979-80 *Skeptical Inquirer*, but I distrusted it because the associated emotions didn't seem to jive with such an interpretation, at least not with the Andreasson affair's nasal implant.

Serendipity stepped in to resolve the muddle with a goof by Phil Klass [of CSICOP]. Discussing a recent addition to the roster of nasal implantees, he asserted that [author Budd] Hopkins never mentioned nasal implants in his books and that [author Whitley] Strieber seemed to have started it off. I was sure he was wrong and began to reread Hopkins to freshen my memory about the details. I soon learned the first claimant was Sandra Larson. Pulling out my old paperback copy of *Abducted!* to verify Hopkins's research, I found the puzzle instantly solved.

It all began in a hypnosis session dated Jan. 17, 1976, when Larson unveiled an account of a space mummy (ala the Pasagoula classic three years earlier) performing an operation that did something to her brain. During this operation, an instrument described as "like a little knife or cotton swab" scraped the inside of her nose and made it sore. The kicker is that the investigators note, inside parentheses, that shortly before her UFO experience, Larson had a similar operation for a sinus condition. It was quite painful, and she had been scheduled for additional treatment that she elected not to

undergo. Now things start to fall into place. The regression had been a reworking of her fears about her sinus condition and its medical treatment.

The Larson story appeared in print in 1977 in a mass market paperback by the Lorenzens. We quickly see the next nasal implant turn up in a hypnosis session dated June 18, 1977, involving Betty Andreasson. Andreasson relives Larson's sinus operation with enough fidelity to transform the cotton swab ever so slightly with a small ball with little prickly things. She adds an element of solidity to the event by including a drawing of the instrument.

Raymond Fowler picks up on the likeness of Andreasson's account to Larson's and, elsewhere, concedes that Betty's familiarity with "uncritical UFO literature" might explain parallels like this. Fowler's only rebuttal is that Andreasson's story in its entirety contains parallels to many different cases, some quite obscure, and on the whole there are "too many similarities" to lay it all to "cryptoamnesia." It is interesting to observe that Fowler says nothing about Larson's pre-UFO sinus operation. This omission is also notable in Budd Hopkins's discussions of nasal implants in *Missing Time* (pp. 208-9, 217) and *Intruders* (pp. 58-9).

Textbook companies routinely include minor bits of misinformation in their textbooks to trip up plagiarists. A copycat can ascribe similarities between texts to shared accuracy of knowledge. No such defenses exists if idiosyncratic errors also are being repeated. The phenomenon of nasal implants is a fine proof of the cultural nature of abduction accounts, for it constitutes a fingerprint of borrowed material as surely as a textbook plagiarist repeating the wrong birthdate of a president. Larson's alien sinus operation is easily understood as the fantastic artifact of a hypnotic regression\_a bizarre misattribution and error. By recurring in case after case of alien abduction\_Betty Andreasson, Meagan Elliot, Virginia Horton, Kathie Davis, Linda Napolitano, Jennifer, and several unknown others\_it serves as a special demonstration that the repetition of a motif may only constitute a repetition of what others have said and not a corroboration of a materially real menace by furtive aliens.

The proof has been right under our noses. [Kottmeyer lives in Carlyle, Illinois, and has written for several British publications.]

REALLity Check by David Bloomberg Noah Way!

This may come as a shock to many of our readers, but it looks like some of the information in Sun Pictures' *The Incredible Discovery of Noah's Ark*, aired on CBS in February and discussed in this very space, was untrue. Yes, yes, I know that it's difficult to believe that such a wonderful example of Creationist propaganda might not be fact-filled, but that does indeed appear to be the case.

According to a July 5 *Time* magazine article, "Sun filled the two hours with a mixture of fact, conjecture, fantasy and arrant nonsense, while offering no clues as to which was which." *Time* continued, in describing the pro-Ark "experts" which were interviewed as "many of them creationists who take the Bible's revelations literally and reject much of modern science." The article also references the terrorized fish fossils, mentioned in the earlier "REALLity Check".

This story was brought to light by a fellow skeptic, out in Southern California, Gerald Larue. After being set up as a straw man by Sun for an earlier show (much the same way Farrell Till was for *Ancient Secrets of the Bible, Part II*, as described last month), Larue decided to expose the "shoddy" research of Sun International. Thus, he coached George Jammal, and Jammal went to Sun with a piece of wood and an incredible story. He claimed to have found the wood on Mt. Ararat, in a hole in the ice. In fact, the wood is a piece of "contemporary pine Jammal soaked in juices and baked in the oven of his Long Beach, California, home." He also related the story about his companion who allegedly had pictures of the Ark, but who had fallen and died in an avalanche. That story was, of course, just as much a hoax.

Larue said, "Carbon-14 testing would have revealed that the wood was a modern forgery." In an AP wire story reported by the *Chicago Tribune* (6/29/93), Larue added, "They didn't test the wood. They didn't even check on Jammal. They just bought into the story." The film's chief researcher and field producer, Dave Balsiger, said, "We couldn't test the wood in time for our deadline, but we were very thorough in checking [Jammal] out." Obviously, not thorough enough.

According to the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion, quoted in the *Tribune* article, CBS "acted

irresponsibly in airing a so-called documentary that was actually a propaganda vehicle for 'creationists' opposed to the theory of evolution." And what did CBS have to say about this? They are attempting to defend themselves by claiming it was "an entertainment special, not a documentary." Sure it was. That's why the host, Darren McGavin, called it "an archaeological quest."

Looks to me like CBS and Sun were trying to pull a fast one on their viewers. But instead, somebody pulled a fast one on them.

The only thing that disappoints me about the handling of the show by the news media is that, if there had not been a hoax involved, I very much doubt the rest of the nonsense contained in the show would have been mentioned anywhere in the "regular" news media. Unidentified Flying Steam?

Discover magazine's "Weather Watch" section in July discussed a phenomenon that many, if not all, of us have heard about in conjunction with UFOs. Ball lightning is back in the news!

A University of Bristol researcher and expert on steam turbines, David Turner, has a theory that he thinks may finally explain ball lightning, described as "glowing, grapefruit-sized spheres [that] seem almost alive." This phenomena is often reported as a UFO.

Without going into too much detail, Turner thinks that ball lightning is "a floating, self-sustaining chemical reactor, in which certain chemical reactions between the plasma and the surrounding air release heat and others absorb it." The chemistry involves steam, nitrites, nitrates, and other ions in the reaction. According to Turner, it explains every aspect realistically ascribed to ball lightning, including its weaving movement. Hopefully, somebody can take the theory into the lab and test it, and perhaps a few more UFO cases will be Identified. Vitamins or "Alternative Medicine"?

Yes, there is that phrase that has appeared in almost every "REALLity Check" to date. The question is: Are some "vitamin supplements" really just alternative medicine under a different name?

From my reading of the June 7 Newsweek, I would have to say "yes". Most of the article deals with the fact that the vitamin industry is currently almost totally unmonitored. The FDA is raising the possibility of changing this, and many vitamin (or "dietary supplement") manufacturers don't like it. In fact, some have mounted a publicity campaign to try to convince voters that the FDA is overstepping its bounds.

While the executive director of Citizens for Health claims, "There just is virtually no risk associated with dietary supplements," L-tryptophan, an amino acid, has killed 37 people and injured 5000 due to what some researchers think was contamination during manufacture.

Another argument that brought the question of "alternative medicine" to my mind was that from Gerald Kessler, who makes Ultra Male. He is arguing that the industry should be able to make their health claims if there is any data at all backing the assertion. It seems to me that this would throw the scientific method out the window, as the implication is that contradictory studies would not necessarily be heeded, and throwing out the scientific method is one of the hallmarks of "alternative medicine." Pennies and Bacon and Warts, Oh My!

Ann Landers, who normally doesn't support pseudo- science (at least not as far as I have noticed), seems to have faltered a bit in her July 14 column. Apparently, somebody wrote to her about trying to get rid of warts. Well, Ann got a whole bunch of letters about "simple" ways to get those warts to go away. Unfortunately, she printed many of them without much comment, saying only that the mail she's gotten is "fascinating".

Among the suggestions were:

"Grandma came to visit... and when she saw the warts, she said, 'We can get rid of them by magic.' She took a piece of bacon, rubbed the warts, and said, 'Tonight when the moon comes out, we are going to toss the bacon over your left shoulder, and the warts will disappear.'"

"...take megadoses of vitamin C. Warts are caused by a virus, and when the vitamin C tackles the virus, the warts disappear."

"Anyone who wants to get rid of warts should rub 20 pennies on the warts and then give the coins to a beggar."

"People can 'will away' warts by the sheer belief that they are able to do so."

"...cut a raw potato in half, [rub] the juice on the warts."

She may call these "fascinating," but I can think of other terms that would be far more appropriate.

{On the light side} The Theory of Dark Suckers

For years it was believed that light was emitted from an electric light bulb. Recent information has proven otherwise! Dark is sucked into the bulb. Therefore, the bulb is a dark sucker. This theory also proves dark is heavier than light. A few examples follow:

**ELECTRIC BULBS** -- There is less dark near an electric bulb than at a distance of 100 feet when it is operating; therefore, it is sucking dark. The larger the electric bulb the more dark it is able to suck. This is easily proven. Also note that when an electric bulb becomes full of dark, it ceases to suck dark and is itself dark, indicating that it is full of dark. This phenomena can also be observed in fluorescent bulbs; the ends of these bulbs indicate when they are becoming full of dark. **CANDLES** -- These are primitive dark suckers. The center core is a dark sucker protected by a soft insulator to extend its life expectancy and maintain rigidity. Proof of its dark sucking ability is relatively simple. Examine a new unused candle. Notice that the center core is not dark. Now, ignite the center core and allow to burn for five minutes. Notice the lack of dark around the candle! Now, extinguish the candle and observe the center core. It is now dark, proving the candle has sucked dark. Moving a pencil through the flame further illustrates the dark-sucking capacity of the candle. When this is done, the pencil blocks the flow of dark, and dark is deposited on the pencil. **DARK IS HEAVIER THAN LIGHT** -- Dark always settles to the bottom of lakes and rivers. This can be proven by descending into a lake or river. The deeper you go the more dark there is! This phenomena can be observed when looking into deep holes where dark has fallen, proving dark is heavier than light. **DARK IS FASTER THAN LIGHT** -- If you were to open a drawer very slowly, you would notice light going into the drawer. (You can see this happen.) You cannot see the dark leave the drawer. Go into a closet, close the door, and turn off the dark sucker. Now, have a friend open the door about one inch. Neither you nor your friend will see any dark leave the closet. Now, open the door until the closet is half dark. Since two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time, you will not feel any change in pressure by compressing the dark. So, it is logical to assume that dark is faster than light. [-- Author unknown, reprinted from the Arkansas Rockhound News (June 1989), Sophia Brents, editor. Courtesy of Betsy Alley.]

===== Short Self-Portraits of New Board Members [Editor's Note: Below are brief self-portraits of new members of the REALL Board of Directors. Self-portraits of the founding members--David Bloomberg, Chairman; Wally Hartshorn, Secretary- Treasurer; and Bob Ladendorf, Newsletter Editor--can be found in the first issue of The REALL News.] Ronald P. Larkin -- Vice Chairman Ron is a wildlife ecologist at the Illinois Natural History Survey in Champaign. He also teaches graduate students at the University of Illinois, including a course in hypothesis testing and scientific skills. Ron's research has involved perception outside the ordinary five human senses and tracking of unidentified flying objects. His father was once cured of a serious affliction by laying on of hands. Steve Egger -- At-Large Member Steve is an associate professor and Chair of the Criminal Justice Program at Sangamon State University. He has worked as a police officer, homicide investigator, consultant, trainer and educator. He is considered an international expert on serial murder and is currently writing his third book in this area. He is an avid reader of mysteries, true crime and science fiction. As a skeptic, Steve is constantly critical of the mass media and their role in perpetrating myths and falsehoods about violent crime, satanic crimes, psychics and new age balderdash. His pet peeve - - "Journalists who almost never research the subject they are reporting." Frank Mazo -- At-Large Member I currently work as a forklift operator at a Mattoon factory. Even though I have been skeptical of the paranormal since junior high, fringe beliefs and those who accept them always have been of interest to me. The mindset of people who are susceptible to strange beliefs, such as channeling and numerology, is what I find most intriguing about this subject. I hope that the psychological dynamics behind such thinking will be discussed at a future meeting of REALL. Kevin Brown -- At-Large Member Kevin is employed by the Illinois State Police's Bureau of Information Services and is

working towards an undergraduate degree in history at Sangamon State University. An interest in the paranormal led to a book that solved the Bermuda Triangle mystery, followed by books by James Randi and the Skeptical Inquirer. He is an "incurable joiner" and is the newest member of the REALL Board of Directors.

===== A Call for Articles & Clippings

REALL encourages its members to submit articles they have written or newspaper and magazine clippings about paranormal and pseudoscience activities they have found to either its chairman, David Bloomberg, or its newsletter editor, Bob Ladendorf. (Send to the REALL P.O. Box or call -- see page 2.) Letters to the Editor

In addition, we encourage letters to the editor about any article or topic covered in The REALL News. We want to make this a forum for all our members. (Letters may be edited if too long. Name, address and phone number must be included with the letter.) Suggestions

Any suggestions for content or layout changes are welcome. -- Bob Ladendorf, The REALL News editor.

===== No-Back Back Page by Martin Kottmeyer [Electronic version note:

Obviously, there is no "back page" to your version, but this article appeared on the back page of the paper version of the newsletter.]

In an article for the Journal of American Folklore back in 1989, Thomas Bullard observed that Carl Higdon hadn't seen the back of the aliens that abducted him. The detail caught his attention and made him wonder if this no-back behavior might be compared to ancient fairylore about misshapen backs being an object of concern to dwarfs.

I had read Leo Sprinkle's investigation of Carl Higdon a number of times over the years, but I must confess I didn't recall anything about this no-back behavior when I first saw Bullard's comment. I had to skim it more than once before I found it. I missed it because Higdon himself did not draw attention to this being odd. An interviewer had asked Higdon if the alien's uniform went over the shoulder, and he answered in an offhand sort of way that he couldn't tell because he never saw the back of them. He doesn't elaborate on it, like how they would have to move presumably with awkwardness to accomplish this odd feat, and the interviewer doesn't challenge him on whether that sounds likely. Frankly, the detail slid by me, too, so I'm in no position to criticize.

I don't know if there is any real significance to the no- back behavior. One could write it off as mere inattentiveness or forgetfulness. It might be an artifact of the sometimes sketchy nature of dream productions and fantasies. I would, however, hate to miss the chance to point out one other possibility. It could be that Higdon based this behavior on one movie alien who also exhibited no- back behavior: The Astounding She-Monster (1958). As it happens, this alien was behaving more rationally than viewers might have thought, as Bill Warren explains in Keep Watching the Skies:

In the first day of filming, the She-

Monster bent over to kill one of the

characters and ripped the suit in the

back; there wasn't time in the 4 day

shooting schedule, said Mark McGee, to

repair it, so in all the subsequent

scenes, the She-Monster makes exits and

entrances facing the camera. Of course

this means she is walking backward much

of the time, but aliens are weird."

(volume 2, p. 3)

(To be continued, or as the Terminator said, "I'll be back!")

Predictions for Future Issues  
Psychic Detectives Survey Results  
Current Research Updates on Top Ten Paranormal/Fringe Science Activities  
The End of the World  
Glossary of Terms  
Paranormal Beliefs in Medieval Times  
How to Write a Letter to an Editor  
Skeptics Online

If you have a computer and a modem, you owe it to yourself to participate in the skeptic message areas on the computer BBS networks. Here in Springfield, call The Temples of Syrinx at (217) 787-9101. David Bloomberg operates this BBS, which carries the FidoNet SKEPTIC, EVOLUTION and UFO conferences, internationally distributed message areas for discussing topics of interest to skeptics. He is also carrying ParaNet conferences, all dedicated to UFO and paranormal topics. You can also find a wide variety of skeptic text files. The Temples of Syrinx -- (217) 787-9101  
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